

"Budget Lowers Tax Rate without Reducing Services for 2017"

I'm proud to announce that the 2017 Tentative budget has a lower tax rate than last year and is below the tax cap of .68 percent. The New York State Tax Cap has been in effect since 2012. The restraints the cap puts on local government can be difficult to manage but growth in the Town coupled with Mortgage and Sales Tax revenue has helped make the 2017 budget balance within the cap.

The now preliminary budget, after filing it with the Town Clerk, becomes the Town Board's Budget to adjust as they feel fit. The budget is expected not to change remarkably after the scheduled budget meetings are over. The last Budget Meeting is this Wednesday October 26th at 7pm.

It's hard to imagine, but most Towns have rates measured in dollars with some as high as \$12.00 per thousand. The tax rate for Clarence per thousand for the 2017 budget is .94 cents; down from last year. Without a doubt the presence of the New York State Police and the Erie County Sheriff, which will be moving into the new Public Safety Building in summer of 2017 helps keep our rate low.

I asked the Department Heads and District partners to stay within the cap with their budgets which they did, making my job of balancing the budget a lot easier. The Town Department Heads always try hard to stay within their budgets, usually returning funds at the end of the year. Highway Superintendent James Dussing was also able to keep his tax rate lower than last year and below the tax cap. The savings in salt from last winter and running an efficient Department played a role in keeping the Highway Budget lower than last year.

Many Town Boards have been in the headlines this year for going over the tax cap and raising the tax rate while giving themselves raises. As Supervisor, in my first year, I cut my salary from the previous Supervisor. I am also not taking a pay raise this year along with the Town Board members who have not received salary increases for almost ten years.

This budget does honor all Union pay increases and a general two percent increase for nonunion employees.

Even with the addition of the Public Safety Building which includes a New Court House, the budget allows the Town to maintain all services and department functions from the previous year.

In the 2017 budget, the face of Main Street will change due to the start of our 22-mile sidewalk upgrade project. Most of the work will be in the Harris Hill area. When done, our residents will be able to walk on a sidewalk from the Newstead's border to Lake Erie. The upgrades will make our sidewalks easier and safer to use. Also, as part of this budget the Town will continue to work with the County on improving their roads including Connor and Tonawanda Creek Road. Upgrades for the Main Street Town Park are also in this budget.

I would like to thank the Town Board, Department Heads, and Town Employees for their assistance for a great budget for 2017.